

SECTION 82

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 1835 Edition | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

This revelation, cataloged as Section 82 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (Section 93 in modern editions), represents a pivotal theological expansion in early Mormonism. It fundamentally alters the traditional Christian understanding of Ontology and Christology. The text asserts that Jesus Christ did not possess the fullness of glory initially but received it 'grace for grace' until He was glorified, establishing a model for humanity to follow. It introduces the doctrine that 'Intelligence' or the 'light of truth' is uncreated and co-eternal with God, thereby rejecting the classical doctrine of Creation Ex Nihilo. Humans are described as having been 'in the beginning with the Father,' possessing an inherent innocence that is lost through disobedience and tradition rather than inherited depravity. The revelation concludes with practical, severe admonitions to Joseph Smith and other church leaders regarding their failure to properly teach and discipline their children, directly linking their personal afflictions to these familial shortcomings.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ, The Father, John (The Baptist/The Beloved), Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, Newel K. Whitney

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. PROGRESSIVE CHRISTOLOGY

Assertion: Jesus was not eternally fully God but grew into divinity grace by grace.

"And I John saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace... until he received a fulness."

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical Christianity asserts the Hypostatic Union—that Jesus is fully God and fully man, possessing the fullness of deity bodily from conception (Colossians 2:9) and existing eternally as the Word (John 1:1). This text argues for a 'developmental deity,' suggesting Jesus had to earn or grow into his fullness. This lowers Christ to a model of attainment rather than the immutable Creator, implying that divinity is an acquired status rather than an inherent nature.

2. UNCREATED INTELLIGENCE (ETERNAL MAN)

Assertion: Human intelligence is co-eternal with God and was not created.

"Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be."

Evangelical Comparison: The Bible teaches that God alone is eternal and uncreated (1 Timothy 6:16, Psalm 90:2), and that He created all things, including the human spirit, out of nothing (Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:16). This text asserts that the core essence of man ('Intelligence') is self-existent and cannot be created. This elevates man to a semi-divine status and limits God's sovereignty, making Him an organizer of pre-existing matter/intelligence rather than the absolute Creator.

3. INNOCENCE OF INFANTS

Assertion: Humans are born innocent; sin comes from outside influence and disobedience, not nature.

"Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning... men became again in their infant state, innocent before God."

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical theology holds that due to the Fall, all humans inherit a sinful nature (Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12, Ephesians 2:3). This text claims that Christ's redemption makes infants innocent at birth and that sin is acquired solely through 'disobedience' and 'tradition of their fathers.' This suggests that human nature is not inherently fallen, undermining the necessity of regeneration (being born again) as a transformation of nature, viewing it instead as a return to an original state.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the definitions of God and Man. Evangelicalism maintains a strict Creator/Creature distinction: God is the uncreated source of all reality, and man is a created being dependent on God for existence. This text asserts 'Finite Godism' or 'Eternalism,' where God, Christ, and Man are all species of the same eternal 'Intelligence.' Christ is merely the 'Firstborn' who navigated the path of progression first. Salvation is therefore not rescue from wrath by a Sovereign God, but the acquisition of 'light and truth' to ascend to the same ontological status as the Father.

Shared Values:

Importance of obeying God; Centrality of Jesus (though defined differently); Responsibility of parents to teach children; Value of truth and light

Friction Points:

- 1. [Critical] Christology (Deity of Christ) – Denies Jesus was fully God from the beginning; asserts He grew into fullness.
- 2. [Critical] Trinity – Separates Father and Son into distinct beings united only by purpose and attained fullness, not shared essence.
- 3. [Critical] Creation (Sovereignty of God) – Denies God created the essential part of man (Intelligence); asserts matter/intelligence is eternal.
- 4. [Major] Anthropology (Original Sin) – Denies inherited sin nature; asserts natural innocence.

Semantic Warnings:

"Grace for Grace"

In Text: A step-by-step process of acquiring attributes and power until fullness is reached.
Evangelical: The abundance of God's unmerited favor poured out upon believers (John 1:16).
Example: *In this text, Jesus received 'grace for grace' to become God. In the Bible, believers receive 'grace upon grace' because Jesus is already God.*

"In the beginning"

In Text: Pre-mortal existence where humans existed as spirits/intelligences alongside God.
Evangelical: The moment of creation when God brought the universe into existence (Genesis 1:1).
Example: *The text says 'Ye were also in the beginning with the Father,' implying pre-existence.*

"Truth"

In Text: Knowledge of things past, present, and future (temporal omniscience).
Evangelical: Correspondence to reality, ultimately personified in Jesus Christ (John 14:6) and His Word (John 17:17).
Example: *The text defines truth as factual knowledge of the timeline ('things as they are to come').*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Receiving the fullness of the Father, being glorified in Christ, and knowing all things.
How Attained: Through obedience to commandments, receiving light/truth, and progressing 'grace for grace.'
Basis of Assurance: Personal righteousness and the reception of light; highly conditional.
Comparison to Sola Fide: Explicitly rejects Sola Fide by stating 'no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.' Salvation is a process of ontological growth, not a declared status based on Christ's finished work.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

- 1. Forsake sins
- 2. Come unto Christ

3. Call on His name
4. Obey His voice
5. Keep commandments
6. Bring up children in light and truth
7. Set in order your own house (family)
8. Translate scriptures
9. Obtain knowledge of history, countries, and laws

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept the 'Record of John' as authoritative revelation
2. View oneself as an eternal being capable of receiving the same fullness as Christ
3. Study secular subjects (history/law) as a spiritual duty

Ritual Requirements:

1. Prayer (implied by 'call on my name' and 'pray always')

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. This passage says Jesus received 'grace for grace' and didn't have the fullness at first. Does that mean there was a time when Jesus wasn't fully God?
2. The text says 'Intelligence was not created or made.' If God didn't create your spirit, in what sense is He your Creator?
3. How does the command to 'set in order your house' affect your sense of peace? Do you feel your standing with God depends on your children's behavior?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The desire for Light and Truth – Humans have an innate desire for truth. Jesus answers this not by giving a list of facts, but by being the Truth. [John 14:6 - 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.']
2. Grace for Grace – The phrase is biblical (John 1:16). While the text uses it for earning, the Gospel uses it for overflowing provision. [John 1:16 - 'And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.']

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance/Perfectionism [Severe] – By establishing Jesus as the model of progression rather than the substitute for sin, the believer is burdened with the task of climbing the same ladder of 'grace for grace' to earn fullness. The gap is not bridged by Christ; the path is merely shown by Him.
2. Autonomy/Isolation [Moderate] – Believing one is an uncreated intelligence implies a terrifying level of autonomy. You are ultimately responsible for your own existence and progression, rather than being a beloved creature held by a Sovereign Creator.
3. Parental Guilt [Severe] – The text explicitly links the 'affliction' of the parents to their failure to teach children. This creates immense guilt for parents whose children stray, suggesting the parents are 'under condemnation' for their children's choices.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Direct revelation and obedience. Truth is defined as 'knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.'

Verification Method: Obedience leads to knowledge ('He that keepeth his commandments, receiveth truth and light').

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology centers on the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7) and the illumination of the Spirit through the written Word (2 Timothy 3:16). This text links epistemological certainty directly to moral performance and extra-biblical revelation.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: May 6, 1833

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: The text claims to quote 'John's record.' Scholars debate whether Smith meant John the Baptist or John the Apostle. The phrasing borrows heavily from the KJV Gospel of John but alters the meaning significantly.